

## Groseclose Water Project

### Service Commencement for Groseclose Water Project

Marion, Virginia

April 8, 2005

Today I am pleased to join with Smyth County residents in celebrating the commencement of new public water service for the communities of Groseclose and Atkins. This project represents another significant success in our ongoing work to bring clean drinking water to all Southwest Virginia homes.

Beginning today, 62 homes in the communities of Groseclose and Atkins will for the first time receive publicly provided drinking water. In the coming months, an additional 15 homes will also be added to the service area bringing the total service area from the new water project to 77 homes in the Groseclose and Atkins communities. Previously, residents in these communities had to rely on private wells for their drinking water, many of which were often insufficient. Residents in the area have also endured on various occasions temporary boiling restrictions at their homes to ensure that the water from the private wells was safe for drinking.

In addition to the 77 homes which are receiving the new public water service, the Mountain Empire Regional Airport and five other businesses in the area will also have access to the new public water system, and today's celebration marks a new opportunity for business and industrial development in Smyth County. Currently, the area from the Exit 54 interchange on Interstate 81 to the Wythe County line is underdeveloped. However, this area presents an outstanding location for future residential, industrial and commercial growth due to its proximity to the Airport and Interstate 81. With access to public drinking water now in place, I look forward to working with Smyth County officials in encouraging new development of various kinds in the area which surrounds us today.

The new water system was supported with \$661,906 in federal funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Act program which is administered by the Virginia Department of Health. This sum represents the entire cost of the water project.

More than three and one half miles of water lines have been constructed along Lee Highway from the Exit 54 interchange to the Wythe County line, along Rocky Hollow Road and along Nelson Lane. In addition, a pump station has been constructed on Lee Highway to ensure adequate water pressure for the project.

The new public water service which will now be provided to residents of Groseclose and Atkins is a outstanding example of the combined efforts of federal, state and local officials to establish safe and clean public drinking water for our region's residents.

Approximately 20 years ago, barely one-half of Smyth County residents had access to publicly provided drinking water. Since that time, we have actively worked to obtain millions in federal funding to establish new water systems in Smyth County, including more than \$13 million in the past 10 years alone. Today, everyone here can proudly acknowledge that this work on the part of many people has born fruit. Today, 72 percent of all Smyth County homes have access to publicly funded water systems.

I would also like to take the opportunity of these remarks to comment on the next infrastructure project which we are working to fund for the community of Groseclose. In December of 2004, Congress approved my request for a federal appropriation in the amount of \$250,000 to launch a public wastewater system project for Groseclose. Since that time, additional federal funding in the amount of \$346,871 from the Appalachian Regional Commission has been secured. Smyth County is currently seeking additional funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia that will be necessary to construct the new sewer system and hopes to begin construction on the project later this year.

Developing a reliable network of infrastructure for all residents of Smyth County is a task that involves the cooperation and dedication of many individuals. And I want to thank some of those who have been instrumental in the success of the Groseclose water project and for the work they continue to do to establish public wastewater service for the community.

I want to commend Charlie Clark who serves as Chairman of the Smyth County Board of Supervisors and Chairman of the County's Water and Sewer Committee; Harold Slemp, Groseclose representative on the Board of Supervisors; other Members of the Board; and Ed Whitmore, Smyth County Administrator; for all of their diligent work to advance the expansion of Smyth County's water and wastewater systems. This project is another example of the good work they are doing.

I also want to thank Scott Simpson, Smyth County Engineer, and Sally Morgan, the Community and Economic Development Director for Smyth County, who both deserve recognition for their effective work in aid of this project.

I also want to thank Bob Dix and Elsie Evans for their commitment and dedication in bringing a public water system to the community of Groseclose and the Mountain Empire Airport.

Finally, I want to thank my District Administrator, Laura Lee, and my new Project Manager, Courtney Lamie, for their persistent and persuasive work in achieving this success. Their outstanding work has substantially contributed to the success we celebrate today.

Today's ceremony is an example of what can be achieved when citizens and government officials at the local, state and federal levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work in providing for clean and safe public drinking water for the residents of Groseclose and Atkins, I want to commend everyone here and offer special congratulations to the residents and business owners who will be receiving this vital new service.